

Leicester,
April 28/79.

My good friend Garrison:

54 I feel in every way gratified & obliged & honored by the renewed & hearty invitation & proposal to join your travelling party in England, &c. this summer; and if circumstances were such that I could go away with a free mind and a clear conscience I would delight to go with you and to be with you in re-visiting English scenes and friends, and in refreshing our souls by seeing what is now doing abroad to keep the world moving forward. But I must not entertain the idea of going. To put in words, to you, what I have never (I believe) quite so distinctly said to any one before, I determined with myself, soon after my father's death, that while my mother lived I would not go far from her. Her affairs have been mainly in my hands since the death of my father, and I do not like to make any change now; and I should not be comfortable in going to a distance whence I could not get to her, in a few hours or farthest. Just

now there is another, and a very painful reason, which will probably compel me, and will certainly make me desire, to remain pretty closely at home the ensuing summer — I refer to the financial disaster which, as you may have seen by the papers, has befallen the business firm of May and Co — the business which my dear father established, without one dollar of his own, eighty years ago, & which no spot or stain of "suspension", or "stopping payment" ever reached under his management. Alas! that all the qualities which he possessed, & which largely characterized his generation, could not have been transmitted. My brother John & his partners (his eldest son, & 2 others, not of our family) have striven hard to keep out of the vortex of failure which has drawn in so large a proportion of business houses in the past 2 or 3 years; they have made, at least I know my brother has — the greatest sacrifices to maintain their name & credit unimpaired, until he stands now, I fear, stripped of the whole

of a handsome competency he once had.
The more they struggled, however, the deeper
they have gone; until now, it seemed useless
to prolong the agony further. I have known
something of the state of their affairs for consid-
erably over a year; and it has been, in many
ways, a sore mental burden to carry. My
brother is steadier-minded than I; and, as I
wrote him yesterday, I believe he will bear this
terrible disaster better than I shall, or can.
I trust it may be kept from my Mother's knowledge.
~ My son Russell is in the firm's employ, - not a
partner. He has worked most persistently & unsparingly
for years, with the rest of them, to re-instate
the house's affairs; & the disappointment to him
adds not a little to our sorrows. ~ In all
these circumstances, dear Garrison, you will easily
understand how little heart I can have now to
think of going abroad; indeed, just now, I feel
loath to show my face anywhere. Not that I can
impute wrong anywhere, but that the situation
hurts & offends my ideas & notions, as it would
have nearly killed my father (I think) if it had ever
happened to him.

I had seen your letter to W. G. Eliot, before recy.
the copy of it wh. you kindly lent me. - I take the
"Daily Advr", partly from preference, on general grounds,
to any other Boston daily, & partly in that, from long habit,
I can find in it immediately, on different topics, what I
am after. It sorely tries me, by various obliquities,
sophistries & cant every week, more or less. I was minded
to reply myself, to its editorial on Eliot's letter, (if not to the
latter also,) & especially, to the Advr's rash & unfounded
assertion that W. G. E. ranked in former times with the
antislavery men! A preposterous & deceptive statement.
Eliot never had a pulsation in common with the abolitionists,
or with any class of genuine anti-slavery people. He had
abundance of contempt for them, as much as his little person
& not much larger soul could hold. Francis Bishop had
a talk with him, when in this country, wh. perfectly disgusted
him (B.); he spoke to me of it, of his own accord. E. bought a
slave-woman, for benev^t reasons as alleged - (it was said at his
own request to save her from being sent far away) - but he continued
to hold her, as his property, until by slow degrees she had paid him
back the money he advanced. Had he paid the money - said, you
never were in truth anybody's property, & are none of mine now, -
& trusted to her honor & gratitude to reimburse him, if she were
ever able, - that w^d have been right & noble & worthy an antislavery
man. I never knew anything he did, while Slavery was strongly
in the ascendant, to entitle him to be thought of or spoken of
as an "antislavery man". - Then how contradictory was
his letter. It was full of considerations & reasons why he should
have come to an opposite conclusion. I am glad you
answered & rebuked him. I have seen no attempt
on the part of the Advr. or any of its correspondents to
reply to you. - And yet (ominous words) on
this subject I do not find myself in that full & clear
accord with you, in which I like to be, & to generally am.

I have hardly the time or self-possession now to write to you on this great subject as I would like to do; and wish we could have a full talk about it. I am free to say, my first impulse is to distrust myself, & the conclusions I have come to, on any social, moral, political, or human question, when I differ from you. I have had so many opportunities, of the severest test-order, to know the value of your opinions & judgment on such questions, that I can never have any other but the greatest possible respect for & confidence in them; and, per contra, so many occasions of finding myself mistaken, as to take away anything of assurance & assertion. - I am sure that you will give me credit for desiring, seeking, & working for the great ends of absolute justice ^{for} & the completest enjoyment of all their rights by, all the free people & all the colored people of the country; and of all others, also, but the time has not come when we can rightfully ~~find~~ dispense with a greater solicitude for those once in slavery than for any other single class in the land. We all remember the keen discussions, in those dark & anxious days when the question of what to do with those conquered Slave-states was up. There was Andrew's theory

To take the best of the old politicians in those States, Slaveholders as they had been, and, taking of them the strongest guarantees possible, commit to them the administration of affairs there. Much as I loved & honored & trusted John A. Andrew, I never gave in to that idea; but latterly, I have come to think him very nearly right. Sumner's idea, that of holding those States as territories, giving them a Territorial gov't. only, & re-admitting them to the Union only when they had proved themselves fit to be trusted, was the measure I approved; but the country wd. not hear of it, - more is the pity & shame. Had something of John A. A.'s plan been combined with Sumner's, a large class & body of Southern politicians & administrators of law might have been - would have been, I believe - formed & educated, who wd. have overborne the old despotic set, & who would have punished the first murders & atrocities committed by Ku Klux, &c. &c. as they observed, & would have nipped those accursed associations in the bud. The re-admission of those States to the Union, with full political rights, (except in case

of a mere handful, I was the great mistake, - the
"blunder worse than a crime". The great bulk
of the white population of those States were utterly
incapable of comprehending the meaning of that
measure in its whole breadth. Whatever of
generosity, magnanimity, & trust in their honor
it had, was not only wholly misplaced, but was
absolutely beyond their moral level to understand.
They only looked at it as a tardy & insufficient
yielding ^{to them} of their rights; and every concession
only called out a torrent of complaints that more
was not conceded. The reins on their hands,
what was there to prevent - by the very state of
things wh. the Repub. party had caused to exist -
the most cruel persecution & harrying of the
colored people, - until the "Mississippi plan", of
making short shrift with every colored man who
would not, in the old style of slavery, crouch &
cringe to their dictation, grew rapidly into form
& towering dimensions. This was the inevitable
result, it seems to me, under the Repub. policy.
I have such a record of murders & atrocities
in those States in the last dozen years (I doubtless

the half was never told or recorded) as would make the most thoroughly informed and Abolitionist stand aghast. But, witness, the 13 octavo volumes of the Com. of Congress on the Ku Klux Conspiracy, filled with facts of the most indisputable character on that head, and I knew of other cases - terrible cases, - and I wrote to Mr. Sumner, and to Mr. Wilson, & to Mr. Hoar, & begged & implored to have some cases, where the facts could be abundantly proved, brought to justice. Neither Sumner nor any one else even effected anything of that kind; & Mr. Sumner gave me no encouragement to effect it would be, or could be, done, - But I am spinning out my letter. I say the Repub. policy was a failure in respect to protecting the loyal people of the South, black & white alike. It put them in a most perilous place, & left them, for the most part, to take care of themselves as they could. Even in his last (so admirable) letter, Gov. Chamberlain says the last Nov. election was carried in that State at the expense of the murder of over one hundred colored men. It is too much to endure, - the responsibility of continuing such things, too great to shoulder. I was for Bristow, because I believe him thoroughly upright, & so well understanding the South's ruin, that he would handle that subject in a better way. We couldn't have him, when I found that he & his best friends supported Hayes (of whom I knew nothing), I gave my best support to Hayes. I still believe in him, as an upright, unselfish man, who means, so far as in him lies, that the colored people, & all the people, shall have their rights, protection, justice. The use of the federal troops in those States was no longer possible, even if desirable; and I know they never stopped the Ku Klux, nor could they be present in more than a few localities, to suppress violence; & the moral influence of their presence was less & less. I welcomed a just man & a friend of the colored people like Hayes (and I believe he is both) who would adopt a new "policy", strike out a new course, try (if you please)

a new opponent, - from which Sumner's better might
 be fearfully looked for. I know the great
 peril he incurs, - that the country risks. I, for one,
 have no confidence in the personal word or honor
 of Hampton or of Nicholls, and not much
 in those of Gordon or Lamar; - but I know
 Hayes has them in a tight place in regard to their
^{strong} personal & ~~strong~~ ^{official} pledges before the country &
 before the world. I am sure the scorn &
 execration of mankind will reach them swiftly,
 if they fail to carry out those pledges; and that
 they will be a hissing & a byword, morally &
 politically, through the land. I wouldn't have
 dared to have Tilden trying his hand at such a work.
 I believe Hayes is doing it from a high motive, in a
 large spirit, with an admirable courage which does
 not bow to his own party's dictation, nor suffer
 itself to be overborne by the cunning or misfortunes
 of the other, - at least, so far. I know he is trusting
 largely to those bad men; & you may well ask, what
 are bad men's promises worth? Nothing, I repeat,
 when having only their personal ~~pledges~~ character to
 rest on, in ordinary relations. But now, standing
 in a position where they are seen by all the world,
 & giving their personal & official pledges & promises

in the most solemn way of which they are capable, they will be pilloried in the sight of mankind if they dare to be false. I strongly think they don't dare to break them. The Federal Govt. will find a way to restrain them, - must find a way, - unless the old disorders & atrocities are brought to an end. Better, I must say, that the colored people generally voted ^{with} the democratic party than to be slaughtered by hundreds (thousands?), annually, in every State, in the hope to uphold the Repub. party.

The old policy being a failure, - as I believe, - and some need me, in other hands, inevitable, I think we are most fortunate in having to cool-headed & upright a man as Gov. Hayes to inaugurate it, to watch its workings, and to apply the brakes, or otherwise, as may be necessary. I "rejoice with trembling", but I have high hopes. The old state of things could not possibly be perpetuated. The question stared us in the face, & demanded instant solution, "What will you do?"

I am unable to ^{see} ~~say~~ what we could do, that
promises so good results, as a course
essentially like that wh. the Pres. is taking.
Had we taken it twelve years ago, it
probably ~~wd have~~ not have been so hopeful,
in most respects. Now, after 12 years of
the severest depression & scourging, from the
combined effects of Slavery, the war, and the
all-pervading lawlessness, those States have
suffered so much, & been reduced to low, that
the bulk of their people welcome the new
order of things, I believe, on higher grounds
than any they ever acted on before, — a love
of peace, a respect for order, a desire for a
chance to get a tolerably honest king. Again
I say, I think we are lucky in having the
national administration in the hands of a
Pres. so cool, self-possessed, firm, and
resolute as Hayes. We may, of course,
find him different from this. We were sorely
deceived in A. Johnston. But how different from his
has Hayes's antecedents been! I think
Hayes should have support from the old

antislavery people; - not by any means,
unlimited & unconditional approval; that
should depend wholly upon his integrity,
fairness, and fearlessness. No body can
complain of the spirit of your letter, or
of the position from which you write. And I,
for one, regret your going out of the country
for this one thing, that I shall be sorry
not to have you on the spot to watch every
step of the Pres^t. & Gov^t., & to administer
warning & rebuke as you may feel needful.

On every other ground I am glad you
are going. I feel sure you will both enjoy
& be helped by it. The best of times to
you, to Frank, to Lucy, and to all your
party. Thank you, again & again, for the
cordial, heartfelt way, in which, for yourself
& the others, you propose & urge my going. I only
appreciate, I hope, such friends & friendship.

Affectionately & always

Yours

Saml May.